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C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 000249

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DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/INS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/11/2018

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [MASS](#) [PGOV](#) [MOPS](#) [CE](#)

SUBJECT: SRI LANKA: DEFENSE SECRETARY DEFENDS SPECIAL
FORCES' HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD

REF: A. STATE 17321

[1](#)B. COLOMBO 161

Classified By: Ambassador Robert O. Blake, Jr., for reasons 1.4(b,d).

[1](#)1. (C) On March 11, Ambassador delivered reftel (a) points to Defense Secretary Gothabaya Rajapaksa, highlighting our desire to clarify U.S. vetting policy to the GSL while at the same time preserving our long-term relationship with the Sri Lankan military. Ambassador invited Gothabaya to provide any information the GSL might have on actions taken against human rights violators. Gothabaya responded that withholding training from the Special Task Force (the paramilitary elite police unit) was understandable, given the frequent complaints made against them. However, he countered that the Special Forces rarely have contact with civilians and therefore are the least likely Army group to commit human rights violations. Gothabaya said it was important to understand how the Special Forces' Deep Penetration Units work and that he would have the Army prepare a report on the issue for the USG. Gothabaya showed the Ambassador a chart, given to him by the ICRC, that showed most incidents of disappearances occurring in areas controlled by the STF, not the Army. He asked if Army Legal Director MajGen Mohanti Peiris, a Tamil and the highest ranking woman in the Army, could visit Washington to share information with USG officials on GSL efforts to bring human rights violators to justice.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Action request: Mission would appreciate guidance on whether a visit can be arranged for MajGen Peiris within the next two or three weeks. Post notes that Peiris is in charge of our ongoing human rights judicial exchange with the Sri Lankan military, and her visit would be an excellent opportunity to touch base on the next steps on DILS training.

Mission would plan to meet with her first, prior to any Washington visit.

BLAKE